



Grace Christian Church, LeRoy MN, Easter Sunday 2010

## #6 No Bones About It

1 Corinthians 15 (esp. 17-21)

*If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being.*

– 1 Corinthians 15:17-21 (HCSB)

### Tombs with bones

Abraham Lincoln is buried today in Oak Ridge Cemetery, Springfield IL. In the years following his death attempts were made to break into his grave and steal his body. So about 1900 his son, Robert Todd Lincoln, had a fortified crypt built for his father. When the original grave was opened to transfer the body to the new grave about 2 dozen people were there and when they opened the casket they saw an almost perfectly preserved face of the President because he had been so completely embalmed. The flag that was draped over him was nearly gone, but his body was still nearly as it had been about 35 years before. Now they placed him into a new crypt, 10 feet deep with 4000 pounds of concrete surrounded by a cage with a rock slab on top.

Other tombs of history are notable for different reasons. India's Taj Mahal is probably the world's most magnificent tomb. Shah Jahan commissioned it for his favorite wife, Mamtaz, who had died during the birth of their 14<sup>th</sup> child.

Napoleon is buried in six coffins, each made of a different material, one inside the other and placed inside the ornate cathedral built by France's king Louis XIV. His great foe, the Duke of Wellington, is encased in his full military uniform celebrating his victory over Napoleon, in a massive sarcophagus at St. Paul's Cathedral in England.

Lenin's body for many years lay in an open glass-encased casket in the Kremlin viewed in hushed silence by millions filing by. Today, since the fall of the Communists, it has been moved and he is buried like a pauper.

### The tomb without bones

All of these graves share this feature, they all contain bones. **If Jesus grave contained bones, there would be NO REASON for any of us to be here today.**

Despite the attempts to either explain away the empty grave by the obvious lie that 'his body was stolen' which the Jewish authorities and the embarrassed Roman military cooked up, or any of the ongoing attempts of unbelievers to look for explanations they like, Christians today know what they believe... **Jesus is not dead, so there cannot be any bones.**

James Cameron, director of the movie, *Titanic*, thinks he found ancient ossuaries (containers somewhat like coffins of today) with inscriptions indicating they contained bones of a man named Jesus and he believes they disprove the Bible.

A prominent attorney and agnostic, Dr. Frank Morrison, set out to disprove Jesus resurrection intending to write a book saying it was a nice story, but there were no supporting facts. He wrote his book alright, *Who Moved the Stone?* but his careful study of the evidence compelled him to completely change his approach from skeptic to believer. His first chapter was, *The Book that Refused to Be Written*.

But most Christians have wondered about the resurrection. How could we not? The people in Corinth did and that is why Paul writes this long chapter. There may be no other chapter in the Bible that is more important.

Certainly, Paul deals with the most critically important issue... **if Jesus is not alive there is NO REASON to be a Christian, NONE.**

### **Decide for yourselves – were there bones or not?**

None of us can be a Christian without joining this age-old controversy... "How can we embrace the resurrection... something we cannot fully understand?"

Paul reminds the folks in Corinth, there were lots of people who saw the risen Christ. So, even if you don't understand it, you cannot deny it. You cannot say it was just a story like Alice in Wonderland or Harry Potter. I Cor 15:1-9

Think about this, how could Peter have stood in the Temple of the Jews in bold contradiction to their power and proclaimed the risen Jesus if it were not true. Would thousands of people have believed his message and then let themselves be immersed in baptism if it were not true.

Over the centuries, would stalwarts of the faith have stood up for the faith like Martin Luther before the council at Worms and refused to recant. John Hus was burned at the stake with his Bible in Prague for his faith. Augustine, in North Africa said, "**he values Christ NOT AT ALL who does not value Christ ABOVE ALL.**"

## **Christianity is worthless and futile if there were bones.**

‘Christianity is a worthless faith.’ is the only possible conclusion a sensible person can reach if there was no resurrection. (I Cor 15:17) So every Christian, every Bible School teacher, every parent who ever told a child about Jesus Christ, every preacher ... all are living a futile life... IF there was no resurrection.

## **Everything else is futile, too, if there were bones.**

Talk about futility... bear with me now... on Christmas morning 2002 the Powerball lottery was \$315M. That day Jack Whittaker’s dreams of a magical new life came to be. But what followed? He had good intentions. \$15M went to build two new churches. \$50M went for houses, cars and cash to people. He turned his granddaughter’s bedroom into a mini-palace like ‘I dream of Jeannie’. But 5 years later he said winning was a curse. He faced divorce, his granddaughter only cared about drugs, and finally ended up wrapped in plastic dumped behind a junked van. He said, “I don’t like what I’ve become.”

Without Christ as the core of one’s life for some it becomes too unbearable even to continue. That is what all pagans have... they have been created with the gift of the ability to seek what is greater than our own selves. But they have chosen a life that has no noble purpose, just an exit, just a sad, bitter end. Perhaps along the way there are bright spots, pleasures, personal victories, accomplishments, wealth, or fame. But on their final day, there is only an exit.

## **Because there were NO bones everything is changed!**

**“But thanks be to God who gives US the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”** 1 Cor 15:57 There is a personal resurrection for **US**, there is more. At this life’s end is a door, a passage to more.

Recently there was a TV show with a group of designer contestants whose task was to take a plain door and make it express who they are. Some were clever, some were intricate, some were colorful, but one was different from all the rest for the raw energy it expressed.

Your life, my life, all our lives have been given the supreme source of energy to fulfill our own individuality in this life. And that is just the preface to our eternal life.

**Christ’s resurrection is proven and it guarantees our resurrection.  
This is not just a transformation when we die into eternal life,  
but also the transforming of our lives NOW while we are still living...  
NO BONES ABOUT IT.**

*Bible text quoted from Holman Christian Standard Bible.*

*Includes material from sermon by Ralph Douglass West in Preaching Magazine, Mar-Apr 2010, pp.31ff.*